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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3533
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2720
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001078

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: ROYAL CONFIDANT SAYS PROGRESS ON "DEMOCRATIC
FRONT;" KING MUST ABDICATE

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) Royal confidant Prabhakar Rana told the Ambassador May 30 that he and others were working to build a democratic front that would unite the main political parties in support of the Prime Minister. The front would then pressure the Maoists to uphold peace agreement commitments. Rana reported that former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa was encouraging King Gyanendra to refrain from speaking publicly and to abdicate if he wanted to preserve the monarchy. Rana was encouraged that the Indians would begin to take a tougher line with the parties to push the peace process forward. The Ambassador and Rana agreed that the enforcement of law and order may be impossible under Home Minister Sitaula. (Comment: Whether the leaders of the parties will overcome their mutual suspicions to unite in opposition to the Maoist threat remains to be seen. End Comment)

Toward a Democratic Front

12. (C) Royal confidant Prabhakar Rana reported to the Ambassador May 30 that there was continued positive movement toward creating a "democratic front" among the Prime Minister and main parties to pressure the Maoists to uphold their peace process commitments. Rana said that former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa had spoken with the PM regarding such a movement and had had some initial meetings with the Communist Party - United Marxist Leninist (CP-UML), which Rana felt should not be ruled out of a democratic coalition. Rana told the Ambassador that the PM recognized he faced increasing dissent within his own party and might be open to additional assistance in moving forward the peace process. Rana said senior Nepali Congress leaders felt the PM listened only to his family and the Home Minister in decision-making, and student party leaders were also raising concerns. While the seven parties recognized the necessity of working under the PM as long as his health remained alright, they were looking at ways to encourage the PM to take a stronger stand against the Maoists.

Pressuring the King Toward Abdication

¶3. (C) Rana reported that former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa had a long meeting with King Gyanendra in which he relayed three pieces of advice. First, the King should refrain from making public statements that could lead to public outcry and put the Prime Minister in a difficult position. If he were to speak publicly, Thapa said, Gyanendra should clear draft speeches beforehand with the Prime Minister. Second, the King should separate his personal and political life; avoid political discussions with associates who were "useless people" and only interested in creating trouble. Third, Thapa emphasized to the King that he held the responsibility of preserving the monarchy. If he was to save the institution, his only choice, and duty, was to abdicate. Rana said the King recognized the tenuousness of his position, even if he did not verbalize it, and was beginning to come to terms with some of his prior mistakes.

India Will Flex Some Muscle

¶4. (C) Rana reported that, following discussions with Indian Ambassador Mukherjee, he was encouraged that the Indians would be tougher on the parties to move the peace process forward. Rana stressed the importance of a unified Congress Party (a merger between the Nepali Congress Party and Nepali Congress - Democratic Party) to the success of the peace process. He added that the Indian Ambassador was ready to "knock heads" to ensure unification, threatening to deliver an agreement for the party leaders to sign if they couldn't make progress on their own.

No Law and Order Under Home Minister Sitaula

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¶5. (C) Rana reported that Indian Ambassador Mukherjee, during recent travels, had discovered low morale across the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force due to the double role of the Home Minister (mandated to enforce law and order as well as be the lead GON negotiator with the Maoists). Rana also referenced the frustration that existed within the Nepali Congress Party because Sitaula had retained his seat as Home Minister in the interim cabinet shuffle. The Ambassador agreed that enforcement of law and order might be impossible under Sitaula and questioned why the PM had agreed to keep the Home Minister on when the interim cabinet was formed. Rana opined that it was due to a combination of Indian support for Sitaula and the Maoists making the retention of his seat in the cabinet a pre-condition for them to join the government. The Ambassador told Rana that during a conversation with Sitaula earlier in the day, the Home Minister had insisted he would begin to enforce law and order and arrest perpetrators of violence. The Ambassador said it remained to be seen whether Sitaula could match his words with action.

Maybe the King Should Take a Vacation

¶6. (C) With a meeting planned with the King on May 31, Rana said he would be suggesting that it might be wise for the King to spend a few weeks in London, having a medical check-up and perhaps taking a vacation. (Note: While the King is in relatively good health, at 59, he holds the record as the oldest living monarch in Nepal. End Note.) Rana said he might also encourage Crown Prince Paras to accompany his father. With their popularity low, and with continued Maoist allegations that the PM's political moves are at the behest of the monarchy, Rana told the Ambassador that having the King and Crown Prince out of the country could be healthy for the peace process.

Comment

17. (C) With increasing bickering between the seven parties and several failed dialogue attempts to move the peace process forward, a democratic front that could re-unify party leaders, counter Maoist abuses, and delineate an election timetable would be welcome. However, such a coalition would require that the parties overcome their paralyzing self-interest. We are heartened to hear the Indians may take a stronger line and will continue to push Home Minister Sitaula on the law and order situation.
MORIARTY